

BARRON COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 700

ROADS, TRAILS AND ACCESS

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700 ACCESS CONTROL AND HISTORY

Resource management and protection activities, recreational uses, and other public uses on the Barron County Forest require several different types of access. Since the Forest is small and diverse with many small compartments, a nearly complete network of access routes has been developed over the years. A combination of geography, soils, vegetation, surface waters, seasons of the year, presence/absence of roads or trails, ownership of adjoining lands, and public regulations interact to control access to any part of the Forest. The Forest has a long history of having gated accesses, dating from the late 1960s. This control of access to the forest has been strongly supported by the public in the development of the past two plans and again had overwhelming support in 2005 public meetings.

All of the existing roads and trails were originally developed as logging roads, or trails used to reach popular hunting and fishing areas. The locations and standards for these earlier roads were not routinely established by county personnel nor were they all correctly placed or constructed.

Over the years, the road density and frequency of vehicle use on the Forest has increased in response to the county's active timber harvest program. Often times, different uses have occurred on the same trails but our limited access policy has lead to minimal conflicts.

Some of the reasons the Forest's gated access policy has had strong support:

1. Lack of user conflict between user groups: e.g. snowmobiling versus cross-country skiing or hunters versus motorized traffic.
2. Damage to trails and routes from inappropriate traffic is controlled.
3. Garbage dumping, especially of appliances is controlled.
4. Tradition
5. Protection of archeological sites

705 CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

1. Provide direction to the resource managers in order to better maintain a network of roads and access trails on the County Forest. The network provides adequate access for resource management and protection activities, as well as provides controlled public access for recreation opportunities.
2. Identify the distribution, density, and types of roads and uses of roads and trails needed to establish a safe and efficient transportation and recreation system that complements the economic, environmental, and social interest in the County Forest.
3. Identify areas on the County Forest where the access is limited or restricted.
4. Identify the provisions and criteria that will be policy when addressing management issues on the County Forest.

710 ROADS

The Barron County Forest staff will oversee the construction and maintenance of all roads within the County Forest. These roads may be constructed and maintained by the County, private contractors working under contract and/or the direction of the county, other public resource agencies and/or by cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations. The specifications for road construction and maintenance will vary with the frequency, duration,

and planned use of each road. Three major types of roads occur on the Forest: permanent primary roads; permanent secondary roads, and limited use roads and trails.

It is anticipated that there is little or no need for further road construction on the forest, but if resource needs require further development we will consider new construction. New road establishment should consider information identifying areas with sensitive soils or severe slopes that have the potential for adverse water quality impacts from land management practices. County staff can work with local DNR water resources staff to develop site-specific measures where appropriate and request necessary water regulation permits where required.

710.1 PRIMARY ACCESS FOREST ROADS

These roads are the primary roads accessing the County Forest. They are designed, constructed, and maintained for year-round use. These roads serve as essential access corridors for the counties multiple-use management goals. Some of these roads are graveled. Vehicle use may be restricted at various times of the year to minimize physical damage to the road. There are on the Forest Road Access Map (chap 900 pgs 19-32) delineated Primary Access Roads 1-A, 1-B & 1-C.

1. 1-A, these roads are high use roads maintained for year-round vehicular travel by the public and for forest management activities.
2. 1-B, these are roads normally open year-round for forest management activities. These roads shall be closed to public vehicular traffic except all forest gates are opened after the state of Wisconsin's gun White Tailed Deer hunting seasons. After these seasons roads may be opened to allow for a variety of winter recreational activities.
3. 1-C, Roads are normally open year-round for management activities. No public vehicular travel of any kind will be allowed, except by written permit from Forest Administrator.

710.2 SECONDARY ACCESS ROADS

These roads often serve a variety of uses including forest management, fire protection, and recreation. These roads are maintained as part of a permanent road system but are often narrower than permanent primary roads and are built and maintained to lower standards. Most of these roads are designed for use only when the ground is frozen or firm. All secondary access roads will be gated, except for the winter season after the state of Wisconsin's gun deer seasons when the roads are opened for seasonal recreational activities. Three categories of secondary access roads are identified:

1. 2-A, These are secondary access roads which are necessary to conduct a continuous management program, maintain wildlife habitat and to provide other recreational activities on the forest. Vehicular use may be limited, or occur only on an occasional basis. These roads do not necessarily permit year-round travel.
2. 2-B, This category of roads shall be closed to public travel, except, beginning one week after the states final gun deer season through March 15 of year when access is allowed for seasonal recreational activities.

3. 2-C, These access roads have no public access allowed. Note: these roads may have a special use designation other than vehicular use such as Snowmobile trail, ATV trail, Ice Age Trail, or Cross-Country Ski trail.

Some secondary access roads are located in areas of the forest where motor vehicular use is limited or totally restricted, such uses will be signed appropriately. See forest road map chapter 900 pages (82-96). In instances where motorized traffic is restricted, vehicle access will only be authorized for planned management activities or fire protection. Non-motorized traffic is allowed on all secondary roads in most seasons except early spring.

710.2.1 Secondary Access Road Standards

- a. All roads will maintained for continuous multiple purpose activities.
- b. After each major use activity, such as a timber hauling, roads shall be graded and seeded in order to stabilize the soil and to provide diversity of forage in wildlife habitats. Maintenance shall include brushing and mowing to maintain a grassed road surface.

710.3 LIMITED USE ROADS and TRAILS

These roads are designed and constructed for short-term use for a specific project; often for timber harvest access. These roads are used only for a short duration and when the activity is done, the temporary road is closed. These roads are naturally or artificially revegetated and closed by use of earthen berms/bunkers or other physical barriers. Most are not maintained as a part of the Forest's road system.

The need for new temporary roads will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Road locations will be included in designing timber harvests. Consideration will be given to the objectives within each County Forest compartment, existing road density, potential use, and soil type.

720 RECREATIONAL TRAIL ACCESS

This trail network provides access for many recreational opportunities on the Forest. An important role of the Forest is to provide sustainable recreational trails that do not cause long-term natural resource damage, and that are compatible with other uses. Management activities adjacent to recreational trails will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Where new plans make it necessary, alterations to existing access roads will be made to accommodate the recreational use. The Forest Administrator has the authority to open, close or relocate trails.

All of the recreational uses of the Forest have corresponding maps in Chapter 900-Appendix. Recreational uses accommodated on the Forest at this time are:

1. Ice Age Trail
2. Snowshoe trail
3. Cross-Country ski trails
4. Hunter walking trails
5. Snowmobile trails
6. ATV Trails

720.1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

Requests for recreational trails will be reviewed by the Forest Administrator. Groups requesting specific trail development or use must present plans for the long term funding and maintenance of proposed trails. Organized trail users and group-sponsored activities must protect Barron County with \$1,000,000 liability insurance coverage and provide a certificate of insurance as proof of coverage.

Construction or maintenance of any recreational trail in which the activity would increase the erosion potential of one acre or more of land is subject to state and federal stormwater runoff requirements (NR216, Wis. Adm. Code and s. 283.33, Wis. Stats). Construction or development for silvicultural purposes is presently exempt from these requirements. Recreational trail development in Barron County that meets these parameters will employ best management practices for water quality (PUB-FR-093-95) to mitigate any adverse impacts. In addition, an erosion control plan will be prepared for each project depicting the location of the project and surrounding wetlands and what erosion control measures will be employed to protect them.

725 NON-MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS

725.1 HIKING TRAILS

725.1.1 Undesignated Hiking Trails

All portions of the County Forest are open to hiking or foot travel unless marked with signs closing an area.

725.1.2 Designated Hiking Trails

Ice Age Trail

The Ice Age Trail crosses the Forest in compartments 4, 5, 8, and 11. All of these trail segments have had application for national certification filed. The trail is both a national and state scenic trail and follows the end moraines of the most recent glaciation of Wisconsin. It is intended to provide a high quality rustic walking experience across Wisconsin.

Management Considerations :

1. Management practices on and adjacent to the Ice Age Trail will be designed to maintain the character of the landscape and minimize the disruption to the trail and its users where management of vegetative cover types make this possible.
2. The trail corridor is considered to be a Zone B aesthetic management zone as referenced in Chapter 500. The temporary rerouting of trails to avoid conflicts and safety concerns may at times be necessary.
3. Protection of trees and signing identifying the trail will be maintained by the inclusion of necessary provisions in the timber sale contract to protect them.
4. In order to avoid confusion with trail users, an effort will be made to avoid the use of medium blue or yellow paint on projects adjacent to the Ice Age or North County trails.

(Medium blue (NCT) and yellow (IAT) are the standard colors for designating these trails).

5. Trails bisecting timber sales will be cleared of trees and logging debris as soon as possible primarily by provisions of timber sale contract.
6. **No** signs will be attached to trees along the trail routes.
7. **All** reroutes and relocations of the trail will require approval of the Forest Administrator.
8. Both the County and the Ice Age Trail volunteer chapters are encouraged to place interpretive signs along trail corridor.

725.2 BICYCLE TRAILS

725.2.1 Undesignated Bicycle Trails

All trails, roads, and fire lanes are open for recreational bicycle use. Off-trail mountain bike use may be restricted in specific areas if such use causes erosion or other environmental damages.

725.2.2 Pipestone Quarry Mountain Bike Trail

This trail was developed by an interest group but they were unable or unwilling to keep up maintenance and the trail is inactive at this time. When a sponsoring group steps forward it will be considered for activation.

725.3 HORSEBACK RIDING TRAILS

725.3.1 Undesignated Horseback Riding Trails

- A. Most trails and roads of the Forest system are open for occasional horseback riding by individuals. Organized group rides and/or repeated rides on the same corridor require authorization by Forest Administrator. Off- trail riding is not permitted. Crossings of rivers and streams will be at developed crossings only.
- B. Equestrian Trails – Two trails along with a horse trailer camping area were established in the Narrow Gauge Compartment in 2010. Establishment and maintenance was supplied by and is the responsibility of the Barron County Horse Trail Association

725.4 CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS

725.4.1 Undesignated Cross-Country Ski Trails

All trails and roads are open for cross-country skiing.

725.4.2 Designated Cross-Country Ski Trails

CASTA Lighted Ski Trail

The Cumberland Area Ski Touring Association maintains a groomed and lighted cross-country ski trail available for public use on the Forest. This trail was developed and is maintained by a land use agreement between CASTA and Barron County.

725.5 OTHER NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL USE

725.5.1 Waterman Lakes Snowshoe Trail

The trail complex is located in compartment #5, the complex has three loops which connect with both the Ice Age Trail and the CASTA lighted Ski Trail. This complex is signed and maintained by the County.

725.5.2 Hunter Walking Trails.

Most gated and/or bermed access roads are signed as hunter walking trails.

730 MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS

The desire for some segments of the public to use motorized vehicles on the Forest continues to increase. The design, maneuverability, and power of the vehicles have been greatly increased. This has led to attempts at greater use, increased trail user conflicts, unnecessary environmental damage, and increased expenses by the county for trail maintenance. Additional regulation on these types of recreational vehicles is needed to protect the Forest and limit adverse impacts on non-motorized uses. If such regulation is not forthcoming from the state, Barron County will attempt to address them in modifications of the County Parks and Forest Ordinance.

730.1 SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

730.1.1 Undesignated Snowmobile Trails

All forest access roads are to be open for recreational use one week after the end of the states gun deer seasons.

Utility right-of-ways through the forest are open for recreational use when access roads are ungated.

730.1.2 Designated Snowmobile Trails

The only types of groomed snowmobile trails authorized on the Forest are state-funded trails. State trails: A system of state approved and funded snowmobile trails has been authorized on designated trails and logging roads. This system is part of the statewide network of snowmobile trails which links Barron County with adjoining counties as well as the rest of the state and adjacent states. Snowmobile registration and out-of-state user fees are used to support trail development, signing, maintenance, grooming and bridge construction. All groomed snowmobile trails on the forest are closed to other motor vehicle use unless such is approved by the Forest Administrator. Silvicultural activities, including logging and trucking, will have precedence over trail use on forest access roads. Attempts to accommodate both uses will be made by the use of timber sale contract language. The DNR's Trail Signing Handbook will be used as a guide for posting standardized signs and will assist in promoting uniformity for all trail signing. At this time, local club trails are located on the forest, if and when such use is requested, it will be considered and an agreement will be drafted outlining acceptable use.

730.2 ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATV) TRAILS

730.2.1 Undesignated ATV Trails

No off trail ATV use is allowed on the forest.

730.2.2 Designated ATV Trails

No designated ATV trails are located on the forest at this time. Such requests will be reviewed and a use agreement drafted to be offered to requesting organization, including times or seasons of use. At the time of this draft preliminary approval of a trail development in compartment # 12 has been granted and developmental funding applied for.

730.3 OTHER MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL VEHICLE TRAILS

There are none at this time and none contemplated. If such use is requested it will be given consideration and if granted a use agreement will be drafted.

735 RESTRICTED ACCESS AREAS

In addition to providing trails for motorized vehicle use, the Forest will also provide and designate areas where motorized equipment is not permitted unless authorized by the Forest Administrator. The principal intent of these non-motorized areas is to prevent environmental damage to sensitive areas, protect historical or archaeological sites, protect endangered and threatened species, provide for human safety and/or to provide areas for quiet, secluded recreation. The following areas have been designated as restricted access areas on the Barron County Forest:

1. All of compartment 1 is designated non-motorized to protect archaeological sites and promote quiet and secluded recreation.
2. The portions of compartment 8 lying North and East of 13 3/4 – 16th Street (“narrow gauge road”) is non-motorized year-round except for the funded snowmobile trail.
3. The access trails of compartment 5 used by the CASTA lighted ski trail are all non-motorized.
4. All forest access roads are gated. If weather conditions allow, gated roads can be opened for ungroomed snowmobiling and/or ATVing.

740 WATER ACCESS

As a result of the distribution of lakes, streams, rivers, and other surface waters on the Forest, water access may be planned, developed, or restricted as a component of the overall Forest access management plan. Several boat landings, canoe landings, carry-in only accesses, and adjacent roads currently provide water access on the Forest for recreational activities. In addition, these water access points also provide several water supply points (dry hydrants) for fire apparatus working to suppress forest fires or nearby structural fires.

The existing water access points will be maintained to provide places to launch a small fishing boat or canoe. Not all watercraft will be able to use these access points. These landings are built for public use and not for private boat mooring sites. Mooring or storing boats for longer than 24 hours is prohibited.

740.1 Public Boat Access Sites Maintained by County

1. Town of Bear Lake

- A. Crooked Lake, section 9 – walk in only
 - B. Kelly Lake, section 18
- 2. Town of Cedar Lake
 - A. Mirror Lake, section 20
 - B. Shinner Lake, section 20
 - C. Chain Lake, section 17
- 3. Town of Maple Plain
 - A. Sand Lake, section 27
 - B. Little Sand Lake, section 27

740.2 Public Boat Access Sites Maintained by Towns (Township Boat Access)
None

740.3 Public Access Sites Maintained by DNR (DNR Boat Access)
None

740.4 Undeveloped Water Access Points (on County Forest)
Other undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats currently exist on the Forest. These are used routinely to hand launch boats or canoes but have not been developed for boat trailer launching. These sites are not routinely maintained and may be closed if erosion damage becomes severe.

745 WILD LAKES

The surface waters encompassed under the wild lakes designation include those restricted use areas that are not open to any gasoline-powered vehicles, water craft, or snowmobiles except when snow covered. Some of the shoreline of these lakes and streams are owned by Barron County. Counties may request that townships, under authority of s. 30.77 (3) Wis. Stats., establish regulations restricting motorized use on these surface waters. Canoes, kayaks, and boats propelled by wind, oars, or electric motors can be permitted. On the Forest, the only lake designated as a “Wild Lake” is Lower Waterman Lake.

750 WETLANDS

In addition to surface waters, all wetlands on the Forest are closed to motorized recreational vehicle use when soils are not frozen. Vehicle use during non-frozen seasons causes soil rutting, compaction and damage to vegetation. The wetlands are not listed individually here but include all areas where soils, groundwater or surface waters support the growth of vegetation commonly associated with wetland plant communities.

755 ACCESS TO PRIVATE LANDS

Applications by private parties to build or improve access roads through County Forest land will be considered by the Committee on a case-by-case basis. The following stipulations will be adhered to before an "Access Permit" is granted.

1. Access across County Forest lands must be demonstrated by the applicant as the route of last resort. Proposed uses must be documented by the applicant.
2. A legal document will be drafted by the County and signed by both parties. The particular document, to be used, will be chosen to best fit the goals of the County.

3. The document drafted and signed will be non-transferable. New landowners must apply to continue the land use agreement.
4. Road improvements and upgrading must be approved and will be supervised by the Forestry Department staff. Prior notification of seven (7) days is required before work starts.
5. All wood cut is the property of the County.
6. Roadway must be opened to the public through county land. No gate may be erected on county land.
7. The County continues full ownership of the improved roadway; however, the County shall not be liable for maintenance or upkeep of the road.
8. Permittee waives any rights to any declaration of ownership or interest in the road on county land for administrative costs as a result of this "Access Permit". The access permit is granted upon the signature and any fees being received by Barron County.
9. The fee shall be based upon an appraisal of the property and the timber by the County.

760 PUBLIC UTILITY ACCESS

Access to the County Forest for utility reasons is covered under Chapter 500-515.5.

765 BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The layout, maintenances, and construction of any road or trail situated on the County Forest shall adhere to *Wisconsin's Best Management Practices for Water Quality* (PUB-FR-093-95). This access management plan addresses the need and diversity level of forest roads and trails within the County Forest. Chapter 6 of the BMP Manual provides guidelines for road construction.

770 SIGNS

Signs on the County Forest will be used discreetly to perform and function while causing minimal disruption of the multiple uses of the Forest. Private signs promoting personal, commercial or political objectives will not be permitted without authorization. Signs erected by the County for management purposes or by non-profit recreational trail groups will be allowed as follows:

1. Informational Type Signs
 - A. Interpretive Signs - to educate the general public about forest management practices.
 - B. Public Land Signs - to identify the land as Barron County Forest Lands.
 - C. Trail Markers - to provide direction and safety to trail users.
 - D. Scientific, Historical or Geological Markers - to identify points of interest.
 - E. Recreational Facility Markers - to identify park entrances, etc.
 - F. Directional Markers.

2. Regulatory Type Signs - to regulate the use of the Forest in specific areas.

770.1 SIGNING STANDARDS

To assure that signs will serve a purpose without damaging aesthetics, the following standards will be maintained:

1. All signs will be mounted on treated wood posts or steel backed wooden posts.
2. Routed wood signs will be used wherever practical. Fiberboard or painted metal signs, when used, will be of neat appearance.
3. Signs placed on snowmobile and ATV trails must conform to state standards.
4. All authorized signs shall be protected by ordinance from being damaged, defaced, obstructed, removed, or possessed by unauthorized persons.
5. All unauthorized signs will be removed by the Forestry staff. No compensation will be afforded for loss or damage to signs during such removal. Individuals erecting unauthorized signs may be prosecuted under s. 43.13(3), Wis. Stats.